

EARMARKS

5-14-09

BY C.W. LATTIN
Orleans County historian

We frequently hear the term earmark from our political leaders in reference to designated funds. However, the first earmarks were a form of identification on the ear of an animal.

Such marks were as good as branding and very useful in identifying who the animals belonged to. The necessity of this goes back to when animals were allowed to roam at will through a neighborhood, grazing wherever they found food.

From the *History Of Clarendon* (1889) we find this fascinating paragraph.

"In the old days the owners of stock had private marks, by which they could tell their own, and these were recorded by the town clerk. This was called the ear-mark record, and the shape of the mark was entered on the book. William Lewis had a slit in each ear of his stock; Stephen Martin, a half-penny on the under side of the right ear; William Dudley, a half-penny on the under side of the left and right ears; Chauncey

Vol. XXXI, No. 20

Bethinking of Olde Orleans

Robinson, a half-penny under the left ear and a slit in the same; Benjamin Thomas, a swallow fork in the left ear and a slit in the right; Noah Sweet, a square cross off the left and a half-penny under the right ear; Cyrus Coy, a slanting cross off the upper side of the right ear; Anson Bunnell, a slit in the left ear; William Tousley, a hole through the right ear; Eldredge Farwell, a half cross of the under side of each ear; Seth Knowles, a tenant on the left ear; Abner Hopkins, a square cross off the left ear and a hole through the right; Chauncey Hood, a square cross off the left ear; John French, a swallow fork in the right ear and a half cross under the left. These are a few of the ear-marks, which we have given to show the custom of our fathers."

Note: A guided tour of Mount. Albion Cemetery will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday with local historians.